

"Fremont County SD #25 is a no excuses, can-do, results-driven district. As the heart of the community, we transform lives and futures through education, collaboration, innovation, and commitment."
Educate, Empower, Inspire

Chairman Sommers and Chairman Kinskey,

As some of you may know, Fremont 25 serves the Riverton area, including high school students that live in District 38 as well as students who live on tribal lands in both the southern and western areas of our school boundaries. Our poverty rate is one of the highest in the state with approximately 1 in 4 students living below the poverty line. Over the last few years, our WAEA scores have shown consistent improvement. We have grown from having the bulk of our schools not meeting expectations to the majority now meeting and approaching exceeding expectations.

Our board goals include:

- Safety is the top priority.
- Achieve a 90 percent graduation rate and maximize student achievement.
- Ensure efficient and effective operations.
- Create a culture that respects, encourages and supports family and community.

We would like to thank Chairman Sommers and Chairman Kinskey for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the budget deficit currently facing the state, particularly the shortfall in the School Foundation Program Account as requested in your letter dated September 30th. On November 30th, we held a public forum to share historical and current budget information, to discuss the impact of potential cuts on our educational system, our students and our community as a whole as well as to listen to thoughts and feedback from the community.

This school year, our district is down roughly 200 students. The majority of these students have moved out of our community and many have moved out of state. This will result in a 1 million dollars loss in ADM going into next year. A 10-20 percent cut creates an additional loss of 4 million to 8 million dollars, respectively.

Historically, our budget has been allocated at 84 percent labor and 16 percent non labor. While we can look to trim some out of the 16 percent non labor, we do not have much room there. We will have no alternative but to cut the majority (86 percent) from the labor side. This equates to the following for the 2021-2022:

1 million dollars in ADM =	12 FTE across all personnel categories
An additional 10 percent cut (4 million dollars) =	45 FTE across all personnel categories
Or an additional 20 percent cut (8 million dollars) =	90 FTE across all personnel categories

If the Select Committee on School Finance is looking to offset the 16 percent shortfall in the 21-22 biennium and then the additional 27 percent projected shortfall in the 23-24 biennium by strictly cutting education spending then we would be faced with roughly 90 FTE each year for the next two years for a total of 180 positions which is 36 percent of our staff.

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The bottom line is we are a people business. It takes a variety of staff both certified and classified to provide high quality educational services and facilities for our students.

These types of large scale cuts will completely change how we educate and support our students in Fremont 25. Class sizes will increase at all levels, course offerings will decrease as we will have to prioritize core content staff and supplies. Programs to support struggling as well as excelling students will be lost. Providing staff to support the mental and physical health needs of students will be impacted. What we can offer for extracurricular activities will dwindle. School closures will have to be considered.

Wyoming requires that schools offer a robust basket of goods that includes the four core content areas plus Foreign Language, Career Vocational Education, Health, Physical Education, Fine Arts and Computer Sciences. School districts have a K-12 set of standards in each area that we are responsible for delivering to all students. In addition, we provide social emotional learning and support, specialized instruction for struggling as well as excelling students, safe and healthy school environments, and health services for students who have medical needs throughout the school day, many of which are potentially life threatening. We assure that all students have access to an equitable education in our rural environment, which includes transportation and virtual options. We give students an opportunity to grow outside of the classroom as well by participating in sports, clubs, activities and place based learning. Our educational system is the avenue toward which we reach the WAEA goals of:

- Seeing Wyoming become a national education leader among states;
- Ensuring all students leave Wyoming schools career or college ready, and
- Improving teacher, school and district leader quality

The success of a state is directly tied to the quality of its citizenry. This was recognized and formalized many years ago when the State Supreme Court constitutionalized the funding of education above all else.

While we recognize the need to be fiscally responsible at both the state and local level, we also believe that as citizens we are responsible for supporting education and other programs and infrastructures that are so critical to our states future success.

We are prepared to adjust our budget based on our ADM loss, which is how the funding model is designed to work and are moving forward with that planning. We have been very fiscally responsible as a district. Our budget is always balanced and when possible we have put dollars into our cash carryover which gives us the ability to offset this type of loss without significantly affecting the level of education we are able to offer our students and family. However, that is not a long term solution. As a school board we also voted to approve a resolution through WSBA that would create a 1 percent sales tax to contribute to the School Foundation Program rather than relying solely on the mineral industry to provide.

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In addition, we would like to note that while we are sending this testimony regarding education funding, we are also very concerned about continued cuts to other agencies across the state and the impact those cuts have on the stability and health of our communities and state as a whole. A loss of 4-8 million in Fremont 25 means a loss of that same amount of revenue base to our community as well as a loss of families that support our local businesses with their wages earned as employees in Riverton. This is compounded at the county and state as all school districts face the same level. At some point, we cut ourselves out of existence.

These are hard financial times, due to a number of factors, and we can appreciate the difficulty and gravity of the decisions that will need to be made at state and local levels. The Board of Trustees would like you to consider the following:

1. Allowing the model to work as it is intended by adjusting revenues to districts based on loss of ADM as we move into an uncertain 21-22 school year.
2. Consider other revenue options that would create a more stable source of funding.
3. Consider lifting the 15 percent cap on cash carryover through the next biennium to allow school districts the ability to prepare for ongoing revenue losses.

A combination of cuts, additional revenue options and the ability to plan for continued economic uncertainties seems to be the most reasonable and prudent steps for our educational system and our state as a whole.

Thank you again, for reaching out and allowing us to provide you with this information that is so critical to the ongoing success and health of Wyoming.

Sincerely,



Carl Manning
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Fremont County School District No. 25